

READING COMPREHENSION STRAND

2

IN ORDER TO PASS THE CAHSEE, YOU NEED TO BE ABLE TO READ AND UNDERSTAND INFORMATIONAL DOCUMENTS SUCH AS TEXTBOOKS, INSTRUCTION MANUALS, AND ARTICLES. YOU SHOULD ALSO BE ABLE TO FIGURE OUT THE MAIN IDEA OF THE INFORMATION AND THE MOST IMPORTANT POINTS ABOUT THE MAIN IDEA.

SOMETIMES IT TAKES MORE THAN ONE READING TO FIGURE OUT THESE THINGS. EVEN THE BEST READERS HAVE TO REREAD IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND THE AUTHOR'S IDEAS. GOOD READERS HAVE STRATEGIES TO SPEED UP THIS PROCESS, STRATEGIES THAT ANYONE CAN LEARN. GOOD READERS OFTEN GO BACK AND LOOK AT FIRST PARAGRAPHS AND LAST PARAGRAPHS, SEARCHING FOR KEY WORDS AND KEY IDEAS. SOMETIMES THEY GO BACK AND LOOK AT FIRST LINES OF PARAGRAPHS, HOPING TO FIND TOPIC SENTENCES THAT HELP.

THE CAHSEE WILL TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF SIX READING COMPREHENSION STANDARDS. THEY ARE:

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| RC †8.2.1 | Compare and contrast the features and elements of consumer materials to gain meaning from documents (e.g., warranties, contracts, product information, instruction manuals). [1 question] |
| RC 2.1 | Analyze the structure and format of functional workplace documents, including the graphics and headers, and explain how authors use the features to achieve their purposes. [3 questions] |

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| RC 2.4 | Synthesize the content from several sources or works by a single author dealing with a single issue; paraphrase the ideas and connect them to other sources and related topics to demonstrate comprehension. [3 questions] |
| RC 2.5 | Extend ideas presented in primary or secondary sources through original analysis, evaluation, and elaboration. [3 questions] |
| RC 2.7 | Critique the logic of functional documents by examining the sequence of information and procedures in anticipation of possible reader misunderstandings. [3 questions] |
| RC 2.8 | Evaluate the credibility of an author's argument or defense of a claim by critiquing the relationship between generalizations and evidence, the comprehensiveness of evidence, and the way in which the author's intent affects the structure and tone of the text (e.g., in professional journals, editorials, political speeches, primary source material). [5 questions] |

[†]Eighth-grade content standard.

THE CAHSEE USES 18 MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS TO TEST THESE STANDARDS. YOU WILL BE ASKED TO READ DIFFERENT KINDS OF TEXTS: POEMS, STORIES, AND ARTICLES FROM MAGAZINES, NEWSPAPERS, OR THE INTERNET. FOLLOWING THE PASSAGES ARE QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STRUCTURE OF THE TEXT, THE ARGUMENTS PRESENTED, THE PURPOSE, AND THE MAIN IDEA. TO HELP YOU PRACTICE, WE HAVE PROVIDED SEVEN RELEASED QUESTIONS FROM PREVIOUS ADMINISTRATIONS OF THE CAHSEE.

WHEN YOU READ, YOU NEED TO FIGURE OUT THE MAIN IDEA OF THE WHOLE PASSAGE OR PART OF A PASSAGE. SEVERAL QUESTIONS WILL DEAL WITH THE MAIN IDEA. AN EFFICIENT READER SUMMARIZES WHILE READING.

MAIN IDEA

Read this passage from a previous CAHSEE administration and answer the questions that follow it.

HOW TO CHOOSE A PASSWORD

Passwords are commonly used today to restrict access to personal possessions or privileged information. Passwords consist of a unique sequence of characters—letters, numbers, and symbols—required to access personal banking information, automated teller machines, secure buildings and businesses, computer networks, certain Web sites, e-mail, and more. Passwords are much like keys. Each password is different, and only the correct one allows the right of entry. It should be something unusual enough that the wrong person could not decipher it just by knowing you.



Before you can choose a password, however, you must know the types of passwords required. First find out if all letters must be lowercase or if upper- and lowercase are both acceptable. Should the password consist of letters or numbers only, or are special characters permissible? What is the minimum and maximum length allowed?

Now you are ready to think of an appropriate password. Your password should be something you can easily remember but something impossible for anyone else to decode or guess. We will discuss poor options first, so you will know what to avoid. Poor choices include names of people, family or fictional characters, common sequences such as QWERTY on the keyboard or 789456123 on the numeric keypad, or *any* word that appears in a dictionary. Other inappropriate choices include your telephone number or birth date. Do not use your middle name, mother's maiden name, your street name, or any other familiar name or number in reverse order.

The best way to choose a password that is hard to crack, yet easy to remember, is to select something memorable from your past. It could be the name of your grandparents' dog when you were 5 (*tippy5*) or the name of your math teacher in room 118 (*118-Thompson*). You could form a string of characters using the first letter of each word in a phrase or saying that makes sense to you. For example, your mother might say, "The sun is shining—So am I." A password derived from this saying might be (*TsisSaI*) or (*Tsis-SaI*).

Once you have created a good password, keep it safe. Do not store it in a computer or leave a handwritten copy where others might see it. You could put the number in your address book in a disguised form. It is not likely that anyone who found Ted Williams, 35 N. Sheldon Ave. in your address book would know it contains your password (TW35NSA).

It is best to have different passwords for each system. If you have used the same password for your bike lock and your access code to the Internet, would you be willing to loan your bike and lock to a schoolmate?

Since unauthorized access to sensitive information could open the door for an unscrupulous individual to access or even tamper with your personal records, as well as those of other people on the system, it is wise to change your passwords frequently. Some authorities suggest changing passwords every three months.

BAD PASSWORDS:

782-8973 (phone number)
Butch (nickname)
LittleBoPeep (storybook character)
12-11-86 (birth date)
dejavu (foreign phrase)
leahcim (name spelled backwards)
QQQQQQ (repeated letter)
XyzXyzXyz (repeated pattern of letters)

GOOD PASSWORDS:

NYTXvincent (best friend in first grade preceded by state of birth and current state of residence)
delygd (first letters of coach's favorite saying: Don't ever let your guard down.)
ofcmgr98 (mother's abbreviated job title - Office Manager - in 1998)

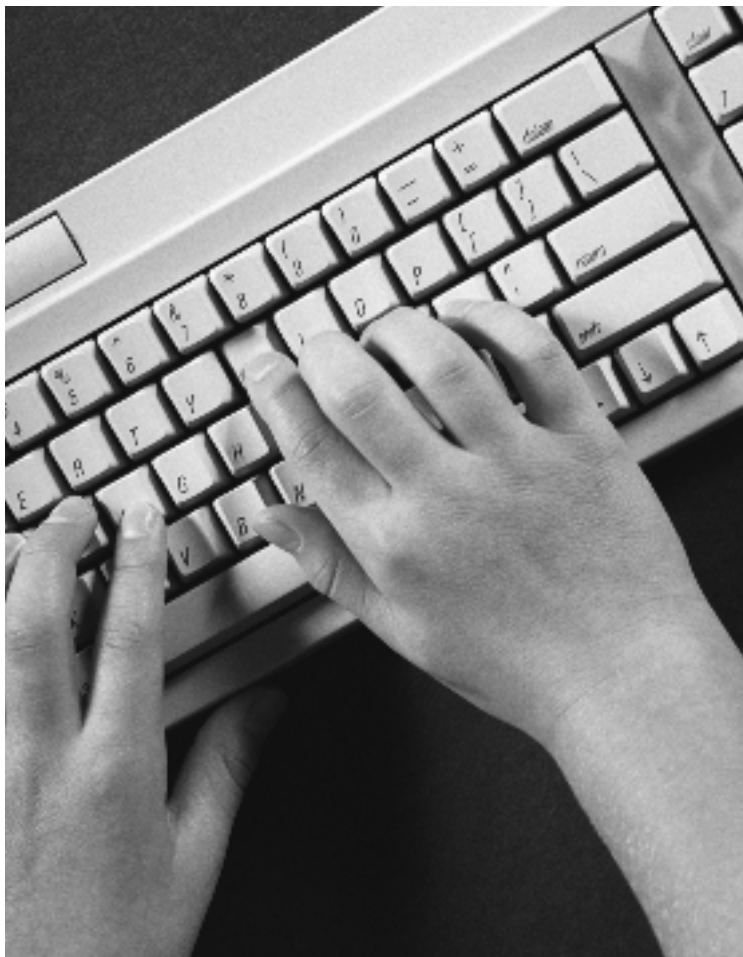
65B

Now that you have read the essay, let's figure out the main idea of each paragraph. When you take the CAHSEE, you might underline the sentence or words in each paragraph that represent the main idea. The main idea of each paragraph in the essay follows:

1. Passwords are like keys that allow the owner to get in.
2. Kinds of passwords required.
3. Types of passwords we should not use.
4. Some good password choices.
5. How to store passwords.
6. Different passwords for each system.
7. Why change passwords regularly.

Then we have the charts—one listing bad passwords and one listing good passwords.

Now you are ready to tackle the test questions.



L165B005

Released CAHSEE question

According to the document, what should you do **FIRST** before choosing a password?

- A. Determine what type of password must be used.
- B. Think of something memorable from your past.
- C. Decide where to store the information to keep it safe.
- D. Change your password about every three months.

Solution

If you don't remember, go back to the article and scan, looking at first sentences only. Right away in the second paragraph you see "Before you can choose a password, however, you must . . ." and there is the correct answer, **A**. (RC 10.2.1)

L165B004

Released CAHSEE question

The two boxes included at the end of the document illustrate information that is primarily found in which two paragraphs

- A. 1 and 2
- B. 3 and 4
- C. 5 and 6
- D. 6 and 7

Solution

Look at the summaries we wrote about each paragraph on the previous page. Which two paragraphs tell about bad passwords and good passwords? The correct answer is **B**. (RC 10.2.1)

**Released CAHSEE question**

According to the two boxes at the end of the document, which of these would be the BEST password?

- A. date of a wedding anniversary
- B. your family nickname
- C. the same number, repeated five times
- D. the first letters in the title of your favorite book

Solution

The question refers you to the boxes labeled “Bad Passwords” and “Good Passwords.” Each of the choices is similar to the passwords in the boxes. “Date of a wedding anniversary” is similar to “birthdate”—a bad password. “Your family nickname” is listed as a bad password. “The same number, repeated five times, is similar to “repeated letters.” “The first letters in the title of your favorite book” is similar to “first letters of coach’s favorite saying”—a good password and the correct answer, **D**. (RC 8.2.1)

Released CAHSEE question

Based on information in the two boxes at the end of the document, *lkjlkj* would be a bad choice for a password because it —

- A. is someone’s initials.
- B. stands for a favorite saying.
- C. is a repeated pattern of letters.
- D. is an abbreviation of a familiar name.

Solution

Although *lkj* could be someone’s initials and *lkjlkj* could stand for a favorite saying or be an abbreviation of a familiar name, this would be a bad password because it “is a repeated pattern of letters.” Therefore, the correct response is **C**. (RC 8.2.1)

L165B002

Released CAHSEE question

Which sentence from the document BEST summarizes the author's main point?

- A. It is best to have different passwords for each system.
- B. Before you can choose a password, however, you must know the prerequisites for the password.
- C. Your password should be something you can easily remember but something impossible for anyone else to decode or guess.
- D. Some authorities suggest changing passwords every three months.

Solution

If you look back at the paragraph summaries, you can see that the main idea of this piece is to offer you suggestions that will keep your password safe so that no one can enter your system without your permission. Which answer represents that idea? Did you say C? If so, excellent! If not, it's probably a good idea to go back and work through the exercise again. Not only will you learn something about the CAHSEE but also you can pick up some good tips for keeping others from accessing your personal information or property. (RC 10.2.8)

L165B014

Released CAHSEE question

What suggestion does the article provide about writing down passwords?

- A. Write it down often so you don't forget your password.
- B. Disguise your password when you write it down.
- C. Do not let people know your password.
- D. Change your password frequently.

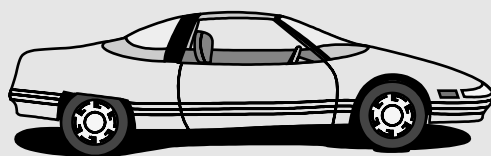
Solution

In the passage the author tells you not to "store it in a computer or leave a handwritten copy" around. It doesn't make good sense to have a password and then tell it to many others. In the fifth paragraph the author advises the reader to write it down in a "disguised form." The correct answer is B. (RC 10.2.4)

AUTHOR'S PURPOSE AND TONE

Read this article from a previous CAHSEE administration and the discussion and question that follow.

Electric Cars Deserve a Second Look



As the world becomes increasingly populated, it is also becoming alarmingly polluted. We deplete more resources, produce more waste, and cause more cumulative environmental strain than ever before.

Fortunately, there are many ways that you can help counter the negative effects that we impose on the environment. One of these is driving an electric car. This benefits not only the environment, but also individual drivers.

Electric cars produce about 80 percent less pollution than cars with gas-powered motors. In fact, the only reason that electric cars produce any pollution at all is that their electric energy is generated by power plants—electric cars themselves emit no exhaust. When energy comes from large sources such as power plants, it's easier to regulate and monitor, so there's less waste than if the energy is generated by many smaller sources, such as the gas engines in individual cars.

In addition, electric cars are simply more efficient than gas-powered cars for several reasons. First, electric cars have regenerative braking, which means that when you use the brakes in an electric car, the battery has a chance to recharge. Conversely, when you brake in a gas-powered car, you actually *use* energy.

Also, during the production of electric cars, more time and energy is spent making the design lighter and more aerodynamic so that there will be less drag from the wind. This allows them to travel farther using less energy than a gas-powered car would use to go the same distance.

In addition to the environmental benefits of driving electric cars, there are also financial and time-saving benefits for the drivers.

For one, they cost less to maintain. The cost of charging an electric car is about 20 percent of the cost of gas, and electric cars require far less

maintenance than gas-powered cars. This is due, in part, to the fact that a lot of the things that go wrong with gas-powered cars simply aren't present in electric cars. Electric cars have no cooling system, fan belts, radiators, hoses, or oil—just a battery. There are fewer moving parts overall, so there are fewer potential problems. Also, electric motors have far greater longevity than combustion motors, so after the body of an electric car gives out, the engine can be reused in another body.

Furthermore, the federal government is encouraging electric car use by giving significant rebates for purchasing electric cars, and some states offer additional rebates.

Electric cars can also save people time. While gas-powered cars require visits to a mechanic every few months, the only routine maintenance required by electric cars is replacing the battery every four years. And California, for example, recently passed a law making it legal for drivers of electric cars to use the carpool lanes any time—even if they are driving alone. This makes your trips much quicker and saves a considerable amount of time, especially in rush-hour traffic.

Overall, there are numerous benefits of driving an electric car. It may take a little getting used to, but in the long run, the use of electric cars can help preserve the environment and give people more time and money to be put to better use.

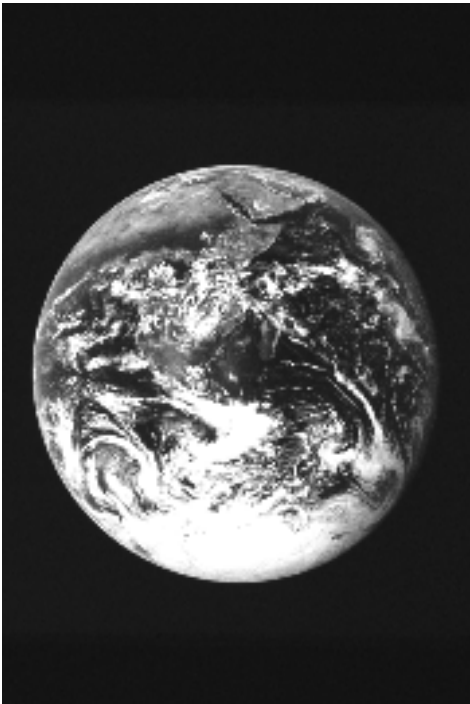
065

Understanding the author's purpose is an essential skill when reading informational text.

The following question asks you to choose the main purpose of the article about electric cars. You should use the same technique you used in the previous exercise but with a little more "digging." Because this article is longer, and the first paragraph is short, you may want to look at the first two and last two paragraphs. Also look at the title.

Good readers often go back and look at first paragraphs and last paragraphs, looking for key words that give clues about the author's purpose for writing. Finding key words can help you understand what the paragraph, story, or article is all about. These are the key words we found:

- Electric car
- Deserve
- Benefits
- Environment
- Numerous benefits
- Preserve the environment



Released CAHSEE question**What is the main purpose of Darrow's article?**

- A.** to convince readers that their cars are using too much energy
- B.** to show how to improve driving
- C.** to convince people that electric cars are good
- D.** to show how the environment can be saved

Solution

Think about the choices. Is this article trying to convince us that our cars use too much energy? The article is more about electric cars than about our cars. Does the article tell how to improve your driving? Does it give ways to save the environment? Buying an electric car might help, but is that the purpose of the article? What was the title again? "Electric Cars Deserve a Second Look." The title and our list of key words all point in one direction: The main purpose for writing the article is "to convince people that electric cars are good." The answer is **C**. (RC 10.2.8)

The next two questions we will be looking at are based on the following informational passage about koalas called “Deadly Leaves.” (This is the same passage that was used in the “Vocabulary” section of this study guide.) The passage and questions appeared previously on the CAHSEE.



Deadly Leaves

Koalas, native to the Australian wilds, initially proved difficult to keep alive in zoos. Because koalas eat nothing but the leaves of the eucalyptus tree, zoos provided them with an unlimited supply of eucalyptus leaves. One zoo even planted eucalyptus trees in a special grove to ensure that the koalas had a continual supply of fresh leaves. However, koalas kept in captivity always died within a year of their arrival at the zoo.

Eventually it was discovered that eucalyptus trees that are less than five years old sometimes generate hydrocyanic acid in their leaves. Taking in small quantities of this acid is fatal to the koala. In their

natural habitat, the koalas’ senses tell them which eucalyptus trees have dangerous leaves, and they simply move on to other trees until they find leaves that are safe to eat. But in captivity, when their keepers unknowingly were giving them leaves contaminated with acid, the koalas were left with only two options: eat the poisonous leaves or starve. Either option was fatal to the trapped koalas.

Fortunately, today’s zoos use special tests to distinguish between poisonous eucalyptus leaves and safe ones, and now koalas are eating well and thriving in zoos.

Released CAHSEE question

What is the purpose of this article?

- A. to inform
- B. to persuade
- C. to entertain
- D. to express opinion

Solution

This is another question about the author's purpose. Does the passage persuade? Is it an argument? Would someone disagree with this article? Does it entertain? Did you laugh? Does it express an opinion? Was the author expressing an opinion or citing facts? If an author is citing facts, then the author's purpose is to inform the reader. Did you learn something about feeding eucalyptus leaves to koalas in captivity? Did you find it interesting? The article "Deadly Leaves" informed you about something. The correct answer is **A**. (RC 10.2.8)



L0103003

Released CAHSEE question**What tone does the author establish in the article?**

- A. critical
- B. hopeful
- C. straightforward
- D. humorous

Solution

What is tone? Tone is the sound of the author's voice. Did you ever hear your mother say, "Don't use that tone of voice with me!"? What did she mean? Maybe you were being disrespectful. Perhaps you were whining. You might have answered, "What tone of voice? I wasn't using any tone of voice!" meaning that you thought you were being very straightforward.

Sometimes authors use words to show they are angry, different words to show they are excited, and still others to show they are concerned. Read "Deadly Leaves" again. Is the author critical of the zoos? Is he hopeful that things will change? Does he tell about the koalas in a humorous way? Or does he tell it "like it is," in a straightforward, matter-of-fact tone? The correct answer is **C**. (RC 10.2.8)

BUILDING EVERYDAY SKILLS

This is from “Staff Responsibilities,” an excerpt from a training manual for new employees at a restaurant. The following passage and question appeared previously on the CAHSEE, and involve the kind of reading that you might run into on the job.



Staff Responsibilities

Greeter

Your job as restaurant greeter requires that you greet every guest graciously and promptly. Upon greeting our early Sunset diners*, be sure to provide them with the regular dinner menu as well as the special Sunset menu. In addition, every evening the chef posts daily specials on the chalkboard at the entrance. Be sure to remind the customers of those dishes too, although those are not eligible for the early Sunset dinner price. (Diners who are seated after the early Sunset period should not receive the special Sunset menu.)

You will be working with a team of three additional members: the person who sets the table and provides the water and place settings (in some restaurants referred to as the busboy or busgirl), the waiter/waitress who actually takes each order to the exact specification of each diner, and the cashier who will accept the diners' payments upon their way out the door after dining. Your job is to ensure that the diners feel welcomed, informed, and served pleasantly in every possible way. For example, if their coats are draped across the back of their chairs, creating a potential floor hazard, please suggest that

you would be happy to hang them in the closet at the rear of the restaurant.

Our goal is satisfied, happy customers who will return to visit us again and will recommend our establishment to their friends. Each employee plays an important role in ensuring that our goal is met. If you smile, greet diners pleasantly, seat them as soon as possible, and provide them with the full range of dinner options, you should have every reason to believe that you have done your job well.

When customers have been unhappy in the past with the quality of service by the person who filled your position, it was generally because of one of the following reasons:

- Customers were left standing in the foyer as the entry greeter continued a personal phone call, ignoring them.
- Customers were not told of their eligibility or ineligibility for the early Sunset dinner.
- Customers' seating preferences were not honored.

* Early Sunset definition: a choice from one of five set-price, three-course meals available to diners seated before 6:00 PM, Monday through Friday. Note: One of those choices is always vegetarian.

L0059004

Released CAHSEE question**Read the following sentence from the selection:**

Your job as a restaurant greeter requires that you greet each guest graciously and promptly.

According to this sentence, what must greeters do?

- A. Welcome customers warmly as they arrive.
- B. Quickly list the specials for the customers.
- C. Ask the customers what they would like to drink.
- D. Seat customers as soon as possible.

Solution

You have probably noticed by now that with a careful reading of the question, the answer can be obvious. Watch for these easy ones and get them all correct. That will help make up for any difficult answers that you might miss. The sentence says, “Your job as a restaurant greeter requires that you greet each guest graciously and promptly.” Now look at the answers. Does the sentence say anything about listing the specials for the customers? Does the sentence say anything about asking the customers what they would like to drink? Does the sentence say anything about seating the customers as soon as possible? Does the sentence say anything about welcoming the customers warmly as they arrive? Not in so many words, but if you greet each guest graciously, that means you will welcome them, and if you greet each guest promptly, that means you will do it as soon as they arrive. The correct answer is **A**. (RC 10.2.1)

Were you tempted to say D, “Seat customers as soon as possible” because the question said “promptly”? That’s an easy mistake to make, unless you read very carefully. It might even be the second or third reading before you realize that “promptly” modifies “greet,” not “seat,” which doesn’t appear in this question.

Let’s move on to the Literary Response and Analysis Strand.



